

Veterans' Day Observance
Monday, November 11, 2024
Mayor's Remarks
Dr. Christopher Tamburro

As the grandson of Army and Navy combat veterans of World War II, I was always fascinated by that global conflict. To me, it was not simply about United States or world affairs, it was a major component of the personal history of my grandfathers.

Peter Tamburro, my paternal grandfather and first generation American, served as a navy torpedoman in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. My maternal grandfather, Donald Huber, was an infantryman in the 55th Armored Infantry Battalion of the 11th Armored Division attached to Patton's Third Army in France. As young men, each was thrust into a multi-fronted global war of epic consequences. Despite the breadth of the conflict, their individual roles were vital to the cause of allied victory. From infantrymen to torpedomen, cooks to doctors, pilots to mechanics, computer scientists to nuclear propulsion engineers, nurses to rangers, quartermasters to intelligence experts, privates to generals, seamen to admirals, every member of the armed forces bears responsibility for the success of the mission.

That magnificent opportunity to contribute to the defense of our country and sustained liberty carries with it a significant burden. One must be prepared both tactically and mentally for such a role. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coastguardsmen accept this as part of their mission, exhibiting indefatigable senses of purpose that ensure the success of their collective endeavor. They tie their personal stories into those of our great nation, securing the blessings of liberty for generations.

Like my grandfathers, many of the young men and women who have consistently risen to this challenge have been teenagers or in their early twenties. In peacetime, they exhaustively

prepare for war, building and testing the skills needed for victory. During combat, they bravely and expertly navigate challenges that most of their peers would find insurmountable. These experiences instill in our veterans great qualities like confidence, bravery, teamwork, discipline, collegiality, collaboration, and adaptability. At the same time, our combat forces bravely endure hardship and trauma at levels that most of us will fortunately never experience.

As we honor our veterans, we must remember that like their actions and experiences are interwoven into American history, wars are often inseparable from their personal stories and identities.

Corporal Donald C. Huber was awarded the bronze star medal as a result of his actions in France. Each time I visited his house, I would notice the shadowbox containing his military decorations. On several occasions, I asked about the circumstances behind these awards. My grandfather never directly responded to my inquiries about his decoration; however, he would take the opportunity to share humorous stories or positive memories from his days in the service. His favorites of which were taking the surrender of a German colonel or turning down an appointment to West Point in order to marry my grandmother. While I may never fully know the details of my grandfather's meritorious conduct, I saw it in him every time we spoke. The confident and disciplined way he carried and conducted himself was undoubtedly affected by his Army experiences.

This serves as a reminder that our veterans carry millions of stories, both told and untold with them always. We must remember to provide our servicemembers with opportunities to share their experiences or support them when they are not ready. And we must not take a veteran's silence as evidence that he or she is okay; rather, we should regard this as a reminder to be present for them. Each story and each person important. Every contribution has affected the

course of our country. We continue to benefit from their service, owing every day to their dedication to the United States.

While we may never be able to repay our veterans for their contributions and sacrifices, we can engage in several deliberate actions to recognize their ongoing importance in our society. Our active and retired service members still have so much to give by employing the skills they developed during their careers in the military. They continue to stand ready to offer themselves for service.

First, we must listen to our veterans. While it is important for us to learn and record the stories of their service, we must also seek out their thoughts on the most challenging topics of the day in our local, state, national, and global communities as well as in our personal lives. Through their service, our veterans have developed unique perspectives, extraordinary analytical skills, and keen understanding of how to lead to for the success of a collective mission. They can identify better than anyone the causes which are truly important. I will be forever grateful for the wisdom that many veterans, like my father, grandfather, and mentors have generously shared with me.

We must also actively engage in outreach to veterans whose stories remain untold and needs unmet due to lack of support systems. Join and give to organizations who serve our homeless veterans and those requiring medical and mental health care. We must give generously of our time and resources to fulfill this responsibility to those individuals to whom we owe such a significant debt of gratitude. We must honor the same promise that each service member makes to their brothers and sisters in arms: leave no one behind.

We must further catalog the stories of our veterans so that their histories may live in perpetuity for us to honor. Participate in oral history projects, invite veterans to speak to schools

and community organizations. Document the success and challenges of their service. Seek to understand the contributions of each person who played one of the many vital roles in our military. When we fail to record and share the histories of our veterans, we lose vital pieces of our great American story.

Nobody understands our ongoing duty to the members of the armed forces more than the family members of every veteran who has been wounded in action. Whenever a brave service member suffers the loss of limb, disfigurement, traumatic brain injury, or post-traumatic stress disorder, there is almost always a spouse, parents, or children who take on the burden of care infused with love, courage, and devotion. These dear loved ones are a crucial part of Veterans Day, deserving of our recognition and heartfelt appreciation for their sacrifices.

It is our duty to treat every day as Veterans' Day. We must never let the sun set without considering how we can honor and serve the past and current members of our armed forces.

To the veterans present here today and the remainder of the millions we honor, thank you for your service. We may never adequately express our appreciation for the extraordinary feats you have accomplished and the sacrifices, both daily and profound, that you have made while protecting our country and the hundreds of millions of Americans and residents throughout the globe who have relied on you for security, peace, and sustained freedom. Please know that Verona stands with you now and forever as your service to our local and national communities continues through your leadership and example.

God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.